



**Director of
Central
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CENTRAL AMERICA: Meeting of Contadora Ministers

The discussions beginning today in Panama among the Central American Foreign Ministers take place amid increasing signs that Nicaragua will be urged by its neighbors to agree to a regional dialogue. [redacted]

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Several reports indicate that the meeting—sponsored by Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, and Panama—will be attended by all five Central American nations. According to a Venezuelan official, the Central Americans are to hold preliminary bilateral talks today. Multilateral regional discussions are planned for tomorrow with all nine governments present. [redacted]

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El Salvador has not ruled out an informal talk with Nicaragua at the gathering but says it will insist on a regional meeting. The Salvadoran position will be coordinated with Honduras, which has feared its refusal to engage in bilateral talks with Nicaragua would lead to its isolation. [redacted]

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Guatemala plans to oppose any one-on-one meetings, while Costa Rica—which recently held two inconclusive discussions with Nicaragua—hopes to push regional issues. Costa Rican officials indicate these will include arms limitation, removal of foreign advisers, control of arms trafficking, and secure frontiers. [redacted]

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Comment: Nicaragua's uncharacteristic reticence on the meeting suggests the Sandinistas want to avoid making statements that would damage prospects for bilateral discussions with their neighbors. The Sandinistas may be counting on Mexico—which apparently persuaded the other sponsors to hold preliminary bilateral talks as a means of gaining Nicaraguan participation—to block attempts to convene a regional meeting. [redacted]

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The Central Americans probably are aware that Nicaragua is following a divide-and-conquer strategy. The apparent coordination between El Salvador and Honduras, however, and Costa Rica's anger over Nicaragua's recent seizure of a boat in Costa Rican waters suggests they will be united in demanding a regional dialogue. If Nicaragua—and possibly Mexico—boycotts such a meeting, the remaining participants would still have a useful forum for voicing their demands. [redacted]

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USSR-MONGOLIA-CHINA: Beijing's Stance Criticized

The USSR has accused the Chinese of blocking an improvement in bilateral relations, and Mongolia has blamed them for the lack of headway in bettering Sino-Mongolian ties. [redacted]

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A commentary in *Izvestiya* yesterday reiterated Moscow's rejection of preconditions for a normalization of relations and said Beijing was creating obstacles, especially with "fabrications" about a Soviet threat. The commentary indicated the USSR is satisfied with the atmosphere achieved at the recent bilateral consultations, but it added that the talks have not gone far enough to allow any firm conclusions about the outcome. [redacted]

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In an unusual comment on relations with Beijing, Mongolia criticized the Chinese for raising the question of Soviet troops in Mongolia at the Sino-Soviet talks and for insisting that Ulaanbaatar adopt a neutral stand between the USSR and China. The party newspaper *Unen* on Monday stated that the issue of Soviet forces stationed "temporarily" in Mongolia could be taken up only after China shows a willingness to be a good neighbor to both countries.

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Comment: The *Izvestiya* commentary reflects Soviet frustration over China's continued criticism of Soviet policy and its refusal to relax its conditions for improved relations. At the same time, it is almost certainly designed to encourage a more forthcoming Chinese attitude when Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Kapitsa arrives in Beijing next month on his annual visit to the Soviet Embassy there. [redacted]

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The *Unen* commentary, which most probably was approved by Moscow, leaves it up to Beijing to take the first step toward improving Sino-Mongolian relations, but it does not rule out the possibility of some eventual movement on the question of Soviet forces in Mongolia. [redacted]

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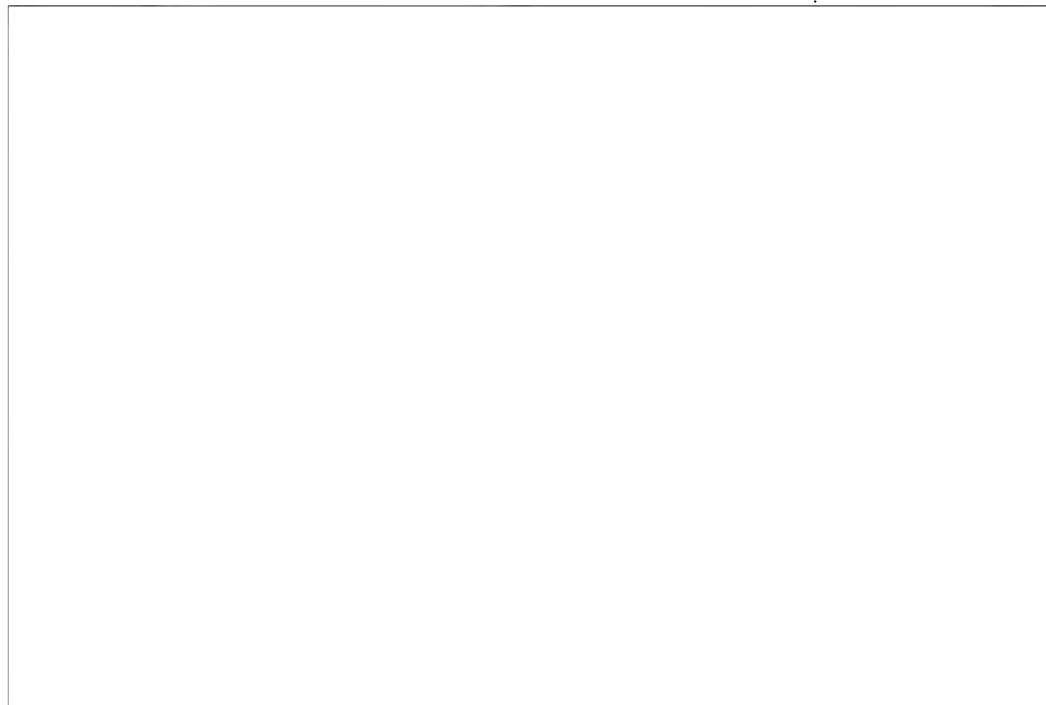
BRAZIL-LIBYA-NICARAGUA: Aircraft Turned Back

An official Brazilian statement yesterday said the Libyan C-130 at Recife was searched Monday and found to contain arms and explosives. This transport and three IL-76s, which are being held at Manaus, were bound for Managua, Nicaragua, with a declared cargo of "medical supplies." Brazil announced that—having lodged an official protest—it would return the aircraft to Libya with their cargoes and crews in accordance with international law. [redacted]

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Comment: The move to search the aircraft may have been spurred by a rash of publicity concerning the flights. The decision simply to return the transports, crews, and cargoes could reflect Brazilian reluctance to jeopardize important commercial relations with Libya. [redacted]

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ISRAEL-LEBANON: Israeli Reinforcements

Israel has been marginally reinforcing its positions in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley since last week, according to overhead photography and press reports. An Israeli Defense Ministry spokesman claimed on Thursday that Damascus is planning a limited ground action against Israeli troops in Lebanon.

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Comment: The dispatch of additional troops

reflect Tel Aviv's heightened concern about Damascus's intentions. The reinforcements fill out the three Israeli brigades in the Bekaa Valley and bring to 13,000 to 15,000 the number of Israeli troops in Lebanon. In the Bekaa, 9,000 Israelis occupy well-fortified positions overlooking approximately 35,000 Syrian troops opposing them, and they should be able to contain a Syrian attack. Current Syrian military activity in Lebanon and Syria appears normal, however, and there is no evidence that Damascus has reinforced its troops in the Bekaa Valley.

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PERSIAN GULF: Problems in Locating Oil Spill

The location and movement of the oil spill from the damaged Nowruz platforms in the Persian Gulf have not been determined, hampering assessment of potential damage. Engineering problems have prevented use of the Landsat System, which was used to track the Mexican oil spill in 1979.

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Scattered air and coastal observations have located oil patches off Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar, and small amounts have come ashore at these countries. The US has provided governments in the region with a computer model to project oil spill trajectories, but its effectiveness has not yet been verified.

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Comment: Wind patterns are keeping most of the spill offshore. The potential for serious economic and environmental disruption will increase, however, until Iraq and Iran agree on procedures for capping the damaged wells. Once agreement is reached, capping the wells will require two to four weeks.

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THAILAND: Election Results

Official Interior Ministry figures show the three partners in the current cabinet—the Social Action, Thai Nation, and Democrat Parties—substantially increased their parliamentary representation in elections on Monday, while the Army-backed parties suffered setbacks. No single party won a majority, however, and Social Action leader Khukrit has asked Prime Minister Prem to lead a coalition.

Comment: Although Prem wants to leave political life, he probably can be persuaded to head a new government.

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